

NAKAI, T. 1939. Natural Varieties of *Galium boreale* and *Galium verum* found in East Asia. *Jour. Jap. Bot.* **15**: 339–353.

URBAN, E. and H. H. ILTIS. 1957. *Preliminary reports on the Flora of Wisconsin No. 37*. (Submitted for publication to *Proc. Wisc. Acad. Arts and Sci.*).

THE MISUSE OF THE TERM TAXON:—Dr. H. J. Lam, of the Rijksherbarium, Leiden, invented the neo-Greek word *taxon* (plural *taxa*), but he may live to regret the day. It was intended purely as a nomenclatural tool to replace the cumbersome expression “taxonomic group” that was formerly used in the International Rules of Botanical Nomenclature. The term was first proposed to the Symposium on Nomenclature called the “Utrecht Conference” that was held prior to the Seventh International Botanical Congress in Stockholm in 1950; it was adopted unanimously by the Conference, as reported in *Chronica Botanica*.¹ It seemed a happy idea at the time; this simple term facilitated the work of the Editorial Committee in drawing up the new wording of the International Code that resulted from the Stockholm Congress; and it also had the advantage of being usable internationally.² Some of the Rules of Nomenclature apply specifically only to families, or to genera, or to hybrids or other groups, whereas others apply to all groups equally, and it is here that the term *taxon* finds its legitimate use, as for example in Article 46: “A name of a *taxon* is not validly published when it is merely cited as a synonym.” *Taxon* here denotes *any* nomenclatural category.

To say that the word *taxon* “caught on” is to put it mildly. It has spread like wild-fire until now, only eight years after its invention, every student not only knows the word but thinks that he knows what it means—that is, just practically everything. We now read of “short-haired *taxa*,” “*taxa* that grow in swamps,” and so forth. This unlimited extension of the meaning is not only ridiculous, it is worse, not precise. To use the word to mean plants, populations, races, species, or what have you, is to debase it and to turn it into a meaningless catch-all. It should be kept clearly in mind that a *taxon* is an abstraction and that it does not have leaves nor does it

¹ Vol. 12, p. 12. 1950.

² And so it has proved; some Latin American botanists have adopted it into Spanish so fervently that they are giving it the plural “*taxones*.”

grow anywhere at all in the world. Where the words "taxonomic group" can not be appropriately substituted, the word taxon is misused. Let us return to the original meaning before it is too late, and use taxon only in technical nomenclatural discussions, except of course when we wish to refer to our notable international journal.—C. V. MORTON, U. S. NATIONAL MUSEUM, WASHINGTON, D. C.

ARCTIUM IN ILLINOIS.—Among weedy species of plants in Illinois *Arctium minus* Schk. has been collected and observed through the length and breadth of the state. Reports of the occurrence of this introduced Eurasian weed are not surprising, but records of *A. lappa* L., and a first collection for the state of *A. tomentosum* Mill. may be of interest.

At the present time four Illinois collections of *A. tomentosum* Mill. are known. Mr. R. T. Rexroat of Virginia, Illinois, is apparently the first collector of this burdock from Cass and Morgan counties. Mr. Rexroat has supplied specimens, which are deposited in Illinois State Museum Herbarium, and has furnished the following description: "Plants one and a half to two feet tall, with several stems from the base, but without large leaves, petioles hollow and involucre arachnoid. These plants flowered a week or ten days before *A. minus* Schk." The following collections are cited: CASS CO.: June 15, 1956, southwest of Ashland in a pasture, *R. T. Rexroat 2847, 2848*. MORGAN CO.: June 15, 1956, northwest of Prentice in a pastured area, *R. T. Rexroat 2849, 2850*.

There are probably not more than half a dozen Illinois collections of *A. lappa* L. on record and the following may be cited: COOK CO.: Aug. 16, 1903, roadsides and borders of woods, *O. E. Lansing 1841*. DUPAGE CO.: July 28, 1953, waste place east of Wheaton, *R. A. Evers 40006*. KNOX CO.: Aug. 16, 1952, field border 4 miles west of Victoria, *R. A. Evers 35568*. Sept. 22, 1954, roadside north of Galesburg, *G. S. Winterringer 11265*. MCHENRY CO.: Sept. 15, 1948, roadside near Richmond, *R. A. Evers*. VERMILION CO.: August 31, 1956, railroad embankment nine miles west of Hoopeston, *G. S. Winterringer 12791, 12792*.—GLEN S. WINTERRINGER, ILLINOIS STATE MUSEUM, SPRINGFIELD.

Volume 59, no. 697, including pages 1-24 was issued 1 February, 1957.